

# PRESS RELEASE



Tiona Nekkia McClodden (1981-), *I prayed to the wrong god for you.*, 2019. Multichannel video installation, color, sound; and six handcarved tools in vitrine. Image courtesy the artist and Company Gallery, New York

## **TIONA NEKKIA McCLODDEN RECEIVES THE WHITNEY'S 2019 BUCKSBAUM AWARD**

**NEW YORK, September 10, 2019**—Adam D. Weinberg, the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, announced today that Tiona Nekkia McClodden is the recipient of the 2019 Bucksbaum Award. McClodden was chosen from among the seventy-five artists whose works are being presented in the 2019 Whitney Biennial, currently on view at the Museum through September 22. In her interdisciplinary practice, McClodden utilizes documentary film, experimental video, sculpture, and sound installation to explore the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality.

Weinberg commented, “McClodden’s work is bold and original and her contribution to the Biennial is extraordinarily rich with cultural, historical, and spiritual resonances. I’m delighted that she is receiving the Bucksbaum Award, which was initiated by our longtime trustee Melva Bucksbaum and her family to encourage living artists and to highlight American artists of particular promise.”

Scott Rothkopf, Senior Deputy Director and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator, who served on the jury, commented, “Beyond the strength of McClodden’s contribution to the Biennial, the jury was moved by the innovative scope of her broader artistic project. As a writer, curator, event organizer, and speaker, she has generously shone a light on under-recognized histories and championed members of her community in a way that expands how we think about the work of an artist today.”

In addition to Rothkopf, this year’s seven-member Bucksbaum jury was comprised of three other jurors from within the Museum: David Breslin, DeMartini Family Curator and Director of Curatorial Initiatives; Jane Panetta, Co-Curator of the 2019 Whitney Biennial and Director of the Collection; and Rujeko Hockley, Co-Curator of the 2019 Whitney Biennial and Assistant Curator; as well as three jurors from outside of the Museum: Ryan N. Dennis, Curator and Art Programs Director, Project Row Houses (Houston, TX); René Morales, Curator, Pérez Art Museum (Miami, FL); and Lumi Tan, Curator, The Kitchen (New York, NY).

Melva Bucksbaum (1933–2015), a patron of the arts, collector, and Whitney trustee from 1996 until her death, launched The Bucksbaum Award in 2000. Her daughter, Mary E. Bucksbaum Scanlan, now herself a member of the Whitney's Board, remarked: "The Bucksbaum Award recognizes artists whose works are inventive, urgent, and promise to be enduring. I am proud to continue this tradition, which was so important to my mother, and I am thrilled that Tiona Nekkia McClodden is joining the illustrious group of artists whom we have honored."

McClodden, who lives and works in Philadelphia, combines video and sculptural elements in her 2019 Biennial work, *I prayed to the wrong god for you*, which merges the spiritual and the artistic to confront the relationship between Christianity and colonialism. The multichannel video installation includes three projection screens and three monitors, as well as vitrines with talismanic objects that are seen in the videos. The work depicts a highly personal ritual dedicated to Shango, a deity within the Afro-Cuban religion Santería/Lucumí, whose origins can be traced to the Yoruba people of Nigeria. To begin the project, McClodden cut down a cedar fir tree and carved six tools from the wood of the tree. Traveling with these wooden objects across the United States, Cuba, and Nigeria, the artist engaged in ritual with Shango. The videos, which chart the labor and time of this undertaking, offer an account of diasporic devotion and the significance of objects as storytellers.

McClodden was born in 1981 in Blytheville, AR. She has exhibited and screened work at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Art Toronto's VERGE Video program; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; MoMA PS1; Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland; Kansai Queer Film Festival, Osaka and Kyoto, Japan; and the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, among others. She has been awarded the 2019 Guggenheim Fellowship in Fine Arts, the 2018–19 Keith Haring Fellow in Art and Activism at Bard College, and the 2017 Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award.

The Bucksbaum Award is given in each Biennial year in recognition of an artist, chosen from those included in the Biennial, whose work demonstrates a singular combination of talent and imagination. The selected artist is considered by the jurors to have the potential to make a lasting impact on the history of American art, based on the excellence of their past work, as well as of their present work in the Biennial. The award is accompanied by a check for \$100,000. McClodden is the tenth Bucksbaum laureate to be named since the Award was introduced.

The nine previous Bucksbaum recipients are Paul Pfeiffer (2000), Irit Batsry (2002), Raymond Pettibon (2004), Mark Bradford (2006), Omer Fast (2008), Michael Asher (2010), Sarah Michelson (2012), Zoe Leonard (2014), and Pope.L (2017).

McClodden will participate in a public program at the Museum that will take place in the coming months. Further details will be forthcoming.

Funding for the Bucksbaum Award is provided by an endowment from the Martin Bucksbaum Family Foundation.

### **About the Whitney**

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists at a time when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for more than eighty years. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

## Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

2019 Whitney Biennial	May 17–September 22, 2019
The Whitney's Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965	Ongoing
Jason Moran	September 20, 2019–January 5, 2020
Order and Ornament: Roy Lichtenstein's Entablatures	Opening September 27, 2019
Rachel Harrison Life Hack	October 25, 2019–January 12, 2020
Alan Michelson: Wolf Nation	October 25, 2019–January 12, 2020
Pope.L: Choir	Opens October 10, 2019
Making Knowing: Craft in Art 1950–2019	November 22, 2019–January 2021
Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945	February–May 2020
Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist	March 13–June 21, 2020
Julie Mehretu	June 26–September 20, 2020
David Hammons: Day's End	2020
Jasper Johns	Opens Fall 2020

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Museum hours are: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday from 10:30 am to 6 pm; Friday and Saturday from 10:30 am to 10 pm. Closed Tuesday except in July and August. Adults: \$25. Full-time students, visitors 65 & over, and visitors with disabilities: \$18. Visitors 18 years & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit [whitney.org](http://whitney.org).

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